IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (original) An image processing method comprising the steps of:

extracting a plurality of candidate images similar to a reference image from among a plurality of images by utilizing granulometry;

transforming the plurality of candidate images on the basis of the reference image;

calculating mutual information shared by each of the transformed candidate images and the reference image; and

selecting a candidate image, which shares the largest amount of mutual information with the reference image, from among the plurality of candidate images.

2. (original) The image processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said transformation includes matching of magnifications.

3. (original) The image processing method according to Claim i, wherein said transformation includes alignment of barycenters.

4. (original) The image processing method according to Claim 1, wherein the reference image and the candidate images are medical images.

5. (original) An image processing apparatus comprising:

an extracting means for extracting a plurality of candidate images similar to a reference image from among a plurality of images by utilizing granulometry;

a transforming device for transforming the plurality of candidate images on the basis of the reference image;

a calculating device for calculating mutual information shared by each of the transformed candidate images and the reference image; and

a selecting device for selecting a candidate image, which shares the largest amount of mutual information with the reference image, from among the plurality of candidate images.

6. (original) The image processing apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein said transformation includes matching of magnifications.

7. (original) The image processing apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein said transformation includes alignment of barycenters.

8. (original) The image processing apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein the reference image and the candidate images are medical images.